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[Vietnam: The Communists appear to be planning to follow the spate of weekend incidents with ground attacks by at least some main force units.

Prisoners taken on 23 February as they probed allied positions in widely scattered areas of the country claim that they were ordered to open approach corridors for other enemy units soon to follow. These prisoners assert that the main enemy blows are yet to come.

[REDACTED] discussing the role of guerrilla and local forces in the current offensive suggest that the Communists intend to sustain their military activity at a fairly high level for some weeks rather than to put all their effort into a relatively brief burst of activity.

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President Thieu's calm and reasoned view of the upsurge in Communist activity appears to characterize general South Vietnamese political reaction. Thieu told the press that the Communists' actions were those of an "enemy in a confused and weakened position." Vice President Ky in characteristic fashion told the press that "the South Vietnamese Air Force is ready to bomb North Vietnam," and that he would urge Thieu to approve such action if the Communists persist in shelling South Vietnamese cities. Ky's attitude later, however, was to dismiss the Communist action out of hand.

Preliminary reaction by the South Vietnamese press ran the gamut from those who urged caution in reacting to others who advocated breaking off the Paris talks. Several papers expressed a belief that the Communist shelling of Saigon reflected an inability to muster an attack similar to the 1968 Tet offensive.

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[Vietnam Communist propaganda reaction has been predictably swift and full of bravado. Hanoi and Liberation radios have portrayed the attacks as an "offensive" launched in response to Ho Chi Minh's recent call for continued attacks. The Communists have been particularly careful to assert that their shellings of South Vietnamese cities were directed specifically against military and government positions in an effort to counter charges that they indiscriminately struck civilian areas. [REDACTED]

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Berlin: Chances for removing the presidential election from Berlin remain uncertain.

Soviet Ambassador Tsarapkin, in his meeting with Chancellor Kiesinger on 23 February, apparently encouraged the West Germans to believe that the East Germans might go beyond the concessions suggested by Ulbricht in his letter of 21 February. In that letter, Ulbricht said "positive consideration" would be given to the possibility of opening the Berlin Wall for visits this Easter if Bonn would relocate the election scheduled for 5 March.

Mayor Schuetz has indicated that he and Chancellor Kiesinger are agreed that any pass agreement must last for at least a year, and presumably cover all major holiday periods, not just Easter. They also require that an agreement on passes be firm prior to switching the venue of the election. The East Germans offered to negotiate a pass agreement following the announced change of site.

Schuetz has been authorized by the Chancellor to sound out the East German authorities, but thus far there has been no reported contact between the two sides. Schuetz has told Western Allied officials that he has until 28 February to inform Bonn whether a decision is still to be made not to hold the election in Berlin. A Bonn official spokesman has also emphasized that speed is essential to the successful conclusion of a deal.

The mayor said he expects the pros and cons of the proposed deal to be hotly debated in West Berlin political circles. It is probable that the bulk of the West Berliners would be willing to sacrifice the presidential election and its emphasis on Bonn-Berlin ties for the chance to see their relatives and friends in East Berlin once more.

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Communist China: Most signs now point to a convening of the ninth party congress, now nine years overdue, sometime in March.

On 5 February, Premier Chou En-lai is said to have told [] that the congress would probably be held in March, though no final decision had yet been made. This is the most authoritative statement on the timing of the congress.

After the twelfth plenum of the central committee last October, Peking announced that the party congress would be held "at an appropriate time." About a third of China's provinces held provincial-level congresses of party members in November and December to discuss the proposed new party constitution and to prepare for the congress. This was the first important activity entrusted to the remnant party organization since it was torn to pieces by the Cultural Revolution in 1966. Presumably, this stage has now been completed throughout the country.

[] claimed a month ago to have reliable information that high-level preparatory meetings for the ninth congress were held in Peking from the end of December to 15 January.

Observers in Peking have noted that some delegations to the congress were already in Peking and that massive preparations are under way for the congress. Provincial broadcasts in mid-February urged listeners to greet the "imminent" ninth party congress.

Other reports received this year have mentioned dates running from late February to late spring, but centering on March. This wide range of dates is further evidence that some slippage has been caused

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by backstage disagreements among the leadership over the form and membership of the reconstituted party. As there has been no apparent resolution of the problems, further slippage is possible. On the other hand, Peking could decide to go ahead with a congress that is largely pro forma. [REDACTED]

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Czechoslovakia: The authorities in Prague are dealing more confidently with the Soviet occupiers and their sympathizers.

The government has decided to take action against individuals responsible for distributing clandestine pro-Soviet and conservative publications which technically are illegal. These publications include Zpravy, the official paper of the Soviet occupation forces, and anonymous publications that have slandered some Czechoslovak leaders.

Three prominent conservatives have been put on the defensive. Youth organizations in Prague have filed a libel suit against party secretary Alois Indra for suggesting that the death by fire of the student martyr, Jan Palach, and youth and journalist meetings in Prague were all progressive plots organized by one "stage director."

Vilem Novy, another outspoken hard-liner, has said that he has been "misunderstood" and has decided to retire from membership in the central committee and the federal assembly. Former deputy interior minister Viliam Salgovic, who was charged with collaboration last August, has denied that he had a role in the invasion and has declared his support for Dubcek's reform program.

Czechoslovak officials appear to have fared much better than the population had expected during recent negotiations with the Soviets to iron out housekeeping details of the occupation. For example, the Czechoslovaks reportedly managed to get postponed a decision to build new housing for Soviet officers by arguing that the decision would contradict the basic treaty agreement on the "temporary" nature of the occupation. The Czechoslovaks

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have announced that the various Soviet command headquarters in Prague districts would be consolidated into a single headquarters "in a few days." The leadership also has announced it had requested that Soviet soldiers--like Czechoslovak soldiers--should not be allowed to carry live ammunition when off duty.

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France-Africa: At French impetus, French-speaking countries around the world have created a new cultural and technical cooperation agency.

Delegates from some 30 countries, most of them African, met in Niamey, Niger, from 17-20 February, and appointed Niger President Diori to direct the preparatory work for the new agency. A team of experts headed by a Canadian is to draft statutes and propose concrete actions in the educational and cultural fields to Diori within six months. The new organization will receive an initial French grant of perhaps \$3 million.

French Minister for Cultural Affairs Andre Malraux at the opening session depicted French culture in the modern world as the successor to that of the ancient Greeks. Among the countries represented were South Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Lebanon, Haiti, Belgium, and most of the French-speaking countries of Africa. Algeria's expected delegate unaccountably did not appear in Niamey.

Canada was well represented with a national delegation plus delegates from Quebec, New Brunswick, and Ontario. Agence France Presse singled out Quebec's participation for special mention at the expense of Canada wherever possible. [REDACTED]

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India: The Left Communists will dominate the new coalition government scheduled to be formed today in strategic West Bengal and will be in position to extend their influence further in the state.

After prolonged negotiations among the 12 parties in the United Front over the distribution of cabinet posts, a compromise strongly favoring the Left Communists was worked out. Ajoy Mukherjee, the leader of a small party made up largely of Congress Party defectors, will be the chief minister. Mukherjee, a [redacted] politician who headed an earlier United Front government, will probably be little more than a pliant front man for the Left Communists, who will have control of the most important governmental activities.

Left Communist leader Jyoti Basu is slated to be deputy chief minister in charge of the state police and civil service--key responsibilities charged to Mukherjee in the first United Front government. This will give the party power to reward officials who further its purposes and to punish those who try to block its aims.

The other eight cabinet posts awarded to the Left Communists are concerned with matters vital to those sectors of West Bengal society that the party is most interested in further penetrating. Government activities concerning landless peasants, factory workers, students, teachers, and refugees will all be under the ministerial supervision of Left Communists.

The Left Communists can look forward to dominating the West Bengal government for some time. The United Front has a substantial majority in the state assembly, and even a split between the Communist and non-Communist members of the coalition would probably not bring the government down. The United Front will probably seek to avoid giving New Delhi any justification for reimposing direct rule on the state. [redacted]

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Panama: The arrest and political exile of Colonel Martinez and several of his supporters yesterday leave National Guard Commander Torrijos as sole strong man in the military government.

Martinez, who triggered the guard take-over that ousted Arnulfo Arias last October, has been the driving force in pushing reform under the "revolutionary" government, but his impulsive and high-handed methods as military chief of staff had for some time caused resentment among military as well as civilian circles.

Recent junta announcements abolishing political parties and promising major land reform--probably instigated by Martinez--may have brought pressure from wealthy oligarchs to have Torrijos remove him. Torrijos, who now commands the allegiance of key staff officers, is more likely to accommodate the old-line elite politicians, who had been under heavy fire during Martinez' ascendancy in policy-making.

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Dominican Republic: Student demands that the government increase its budget for the University of Santo Domingo have already resulted in violence, and further disorders are likely.

On 20 February a student member of the Communist Dominican Popular Movement was killed by police during a secondary school demonstration. The police succeeded in preventing any serious violence during his funeral on 21 February, but students will almost certainly continue efforts to make a martyr of their comrade. Student agitation in recent weeks has been marked by increased militancy. Small-scale disturbances and bomb explosions, which occurred both in the capital and interior cities in the last week, are likely to continue in view of the support of secondary school students for the university's position.

The university's recurrent budget problem, which has served as a rallying point for leftist forces, last year led to violent clashes between students and government forces. Some of the Communist factions at the university have formed a "united front" for this year's budget struggle, and the leftist, major opposition Dominican Revolutionary Party has also supported university demands. The university council, alleging insufficient funds, has voted to suspend the salaries of teaching and administrative personnel beginning on 1 March, probably in an effort to force a showdown.

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Korea: On 24 February, a South Korean destroyer exchanged fire with what probably was a North Korean agent boat off the South Korean west coast. When engaged, the North Korean boat was rapidly withdrawing from South Korean waters, possibly after landing agents. So far, however, there have been no reports of contacts with infiltrators in the area. The agent boat apparently was hit, but escaped into North Korean waters. The South Korean destroyer sustained four casualties and minor damage. [REDACTED]

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Communist China: There are new indications that Peking may send ambassadors abroad in the near future. Chinese ambassadors were recalled for revolutionary reindoctrination in 1967, and only one has remained at his post. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Chinese diplomats have indicated that several ambassadorial posts in Asia and Western Europe will be filled sometime this spring.

These remarks apparently reflect the belief that the forthcoming ninth party congress will have a "normalizing" effect on Chinese foreign relations. [REDACTED]

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Guatemala: Defense Minister Chinchilla's resignation late last week follows closely on his withdrawal as the ruling party's presidential candidate for 1970. Estrangement between President Mendez and Chinchilla developed following a disagreement with party leaders several weeks ago. Mendez' lack of support for Chinchilla during the clash probably convinced him that his dismissal would come soon. Chinchilla's replacement, General Reyes, although reported to be a relatively colorless and cautious individual, is loyal to the President. These changes are not expected to cause adverse reaction within the military. [REDACTED]

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